

INTELLOFAX 25

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY China
SUBJECT Land Reform Program as Applied in Chungshan
Hsien, Kwangtung
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1. Chungshan (113-56, 22-22) Hsien is well known for its large land holdings, many of which exceed a thousand mou, something not common in Kwangtung. Landlords for the most part are absent, and the collection of rents is handled through a group of local agents who are tough, armed men, hooked up with local bullies and sometimes even with bandits. Without dealings with these rough men, collection of rents would be hardly possible. In fact, many if not most of these local roughnecks make their living by taking a share of the land rent, promising protection in return. However, in recent decades when law and order have been lacking in the countryside, their protection has proved effective.
2. In December 1950 with agitation for a land reform program, with the movement for the reduction of rent and interest in full swing, with heavy levies on landlords and other agricultural producers, and with the drastic measures taken against traditional power groups and local armed elements, the interests of both the landlords and the local toughs were hard hit. Though the interests of these two groups were formerly antagonistic, they found a common enemy in the new regime; landlords and local bullies, are now working together to preserve the old system against the new power. By the use of force and by traditional social relationships, these two groups still command the following of a very considerable number of the peasants at all economic levels.
3. Because of this resistance, which may be stronger than at many other places in the Delta, Communist authorities in the countryside in this district are turning to the use of rougher methods, such as beating and killing, in dealing with local recalcitrants.
4. Land reform, including land redistribution, proceeds only slowly here for the following two other reasons:
 - a. many of the landowners are overseas Chinese, living in Hong Kong and Macao and in foreign countries. The government has professed a policy of protecting the legitimate interest of these persons thereby trying

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to win their political and financial support. Consequently, land holdings of overseas Chinese are not treated the same way as those of ordinary landowners, and are not subjected to confiscation.

- b. The unit of farming is bigger here than in most of the places on the Delta. Each unit also contains a complicated drainage and irrigation system, as much of the land recently reclaimed from low-lying mud flats of the Canton estuary is frequently subjected to floods if the irrigation system is not properly maintained. Such units would be destroyed if they were sub-divided for redistribution. Meanwhile, the government has neither the personnel or the capital to take over the operation of such large farms, the number of which is considerable. In order to maintain control and production the Communists have been forced to subscribe to this outmoded system which means, in effect, the perpetuation of reactionary elements and the indefinite postponing of general land reform. As a consequence, their hold on the majority of the population is extremely slight.

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